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April 1968 No. 39

THE CHRISTIAN-MARXIST DIALOGUE ON THE RENEWAL OF SOCIETY

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A LETTER FROM 15 ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF THE THIRD WORLD

(Interpreting Populorum Progressio for their Situation)

Published in French, in Christianisme Social 1967, No. 11-12, pp. 693-704

In the face of the profound movements which today are arousing the masses of workers and peasants in the Third World, some of their pastoral bishops address this message to their priests, their faithful, and all men of good will.

From Colombia and Brazil to the South Seas and China, in the Sahara, Yugoslavia, and the Middle East, the light of the Gospel illumines those questions which are everywhere almost the same.

At a time when the poor peoples and races are becoming conscious of themselves and of the exploitation of which they are still victims, this message will give courage to all who suffer and struggle for justice - which is the indispensable condition for peace.

(1) As bishops of some of the peoples who are striving and struggling for their development, we unite our voices with the anguished appeal of Pope Paul VI in his letter Populorum Progressio. We wish to clarify the responsibilities of our priests and faithful, and to address some words of encouragement to all our brothers of the Third World.

(2) Our churches, in this Third World situation, find themselves embroiled in a conflict which is no longer just a confrontation between East and West. There are now three major groups of people: the Western powers which grew wealthy in the last century, the two large Communist countries which have become great powers, and finally the Third World which is still seeking to escape the hold of the great powers and to develop freely. Even within the developed countries certain social classes, races or peoples have not yet obtained the right to a truly human life. An irresistable pressure moves these poor peoples toward their advancement by liberating them from all forces of oppression. While most nations have succeeded in obtaining political freedom, peoples with economic freedom are still rare. Just as rarer are those with social equality, which is an indispensable condition of true brotherhood - there can be no peace without justice. The peoples of the Third World form the proletariat of mankind today. They are exploited by the great and threatened in their very existence by those who, because they are more powerful, assume the right to be the judges and policemen of the less fortunate. Our people are neither less wise nor less just than the great of this world.

I. Freedom in Political, Economic and Social Systems

(3) Revolutions have happened or are happening in the present evolution of the world. All the powers which are now established were born in an era more or less far removed from revolution - and by "revolution" we mean a rupture with a system which did not secure the common good and the inauguration of a new order better able to obtain it. Not all revolutions are necessarily good. Some are only palace coups which do nothing but change the people's oppressors. Some are worse, not better; they "produce(s) new injustices". (Populorum Progressio 31). Atheism and collectivism, with which certain social movements think they must be bound, are grave dangers for humanity. History shows, however, that some revolutions were necessary,and rose above their temporary anti-religion, producing good fruit. It is no longer contested that the 1789 revolution in France made possible the affirmation of the rights of man

(Cf., Pacem in Terris, No. 11-27). Many of our nations have had to effect, or must now effect, these far-reaching changes. How should Christians and churches respond to this situation? Paul VI already has cast light on our way with the encyclical On the Development of Peoples (Populorum Progressio 30, 31, 32).

(4) Doctrinally, the Church knows that the Gospel requires the primary and radical revolution which is called conversion - the complete about-face from sin to grace, from selfishness to love, from pride to humble service. This conversion is not only internal and spiritual; it concerns the whole man, corporeal and social as well as spiritual and personal. It has a communal aspect of immense consequence for the whole society, not only for men's life here below but especially for the eternal life in Christ who, raised from the earth, draws all humanity to himself. In the eyes of the Christian, this is man's complete fulfilment. Thus for twenty centuries the Gospel has been the most powerful ferment for profound changes in mankind, whether visibly or invisibly, whether within or apart from the Church.

(5) Nevertheless in its historical pilgrimage the Church is in practice always linked with a political, social and economic system which, for that moment of history, assures the common good or at least a certain social order. Sometimes the churches even find themselves so bound to a certain system that the two seem to be identical, unified in a single flesh as in marriage. But the church has only one spouse; Christ. It is never married to any system, whatever it be, and especially not to "the international imperialism of money" (Populorum Progressio 26). Likewise it was not married to royalty or to the feudalism of the ancien régime, nor will it be married tomorrow to this or that socialism. A glance at history is enough to show that the Church has survived the destruction of powers which once believed they had to protect her or could use her. Today the Church's social doctrine, reaffirmed at Vatican II, has already broken away from this imperialism of money with which it was allied for a time.

(6) Following the Council voices were raised energetically, demanding an end to this temporary collusion between the Church and money which was denounced from various sides. Some bishops have already provided the example.[1] We must undertake a serious examination of our own situation and liberate our churches from all servitude to great international finance. "One cannot serve God and money."

(7) In the face of the present development of the imperialism of money, we address to our faithful and restate for ourselves the advice given to the Christians of Rome by the seer of Patmos before the imminent fall of this great city, prostituted in luxury based on the oppression of the people and on the slave trade: "Come out, my people, away from her, so that you do not share in her crimes and have the same plagues to bear." (Rev. 18:4).

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1) Populorum Progressio cites the example of the late bishop of Talca (Chile), Manuel Larrain.

(8) In its essential and permanent aspect - that is, its fidelity to and communion with Christ in the Gospel - the church is never bound to any political, economic and social system. When a system ceases to assure the common good for some, the Church must not only denounce the injustice: it must disengage itself from the inequitable system and be ready to collaborate with another more just system better adapted to the needs of the time.

II. Fidelity to the People

(9) The following applies to Christians, as it does to their hierarchies and to the churches. Here below we do not have a permanent city, because our leader, Christ, was willing to suffer outside the city (Heb. 13:12, 14). Therefore, none of us remains in bondage to the privileges of money, but is ready to "(share his) resources, for these are sacrifices that please God" (Heb. 13:16). Even if we have not been able to do so willingly and lovingly, let us at least know how to recognize the hand of God who corrects us like sons in the events which compel us to this sacrifice (Heb. 12:5).

(10) We do not judge or condemn any who, before God, have believed or believe they must go into exile to safeguard their faith or their children's faith. The only ones who must be condemned strongly are those who drive out the population by oppressing them materially or spiritually or by taking their land.

Christians and their pastors desire in their hearts to remain among their people, in the land which is theirs. History shows that only rarely do people remain happily in exile over a long period, seeking refuge in another place. They must either defend their land against unjust foreign aggression or accept the governmental changes imposed on their country. It is wrong for Christians to withdraw from their country and their people in the hour of trial, especially if these Christians are rich and are really fleeing only to save their wealth and privileges. Certainly a family or an individual might be obliged to emigrate to seek work in conformity with the right of emigration (Cf., Pacem in Terris). But the massive exodus of Christians can cause deplorable situations. Christians are normally called by God in their own land, among their own people, to fulfill their life in solidarity with their brothers of whatever religion in order to witness among them to Christ's love for all.

(11) We bishops and priests have an even more pressing obligation to remain at our place. For we are the vicars of the Good Shepherd who does not desert like a hired servant in time of danger, but remains with his flock, ready to give his life for theirs (John 10:11-18). When Jesus told his disciples to flee from one town to another (Matt. 10:23), it was only in the case of personal persecution for the faith. This is quite different from war or revolution involving a whole people when the pastor must remain in solidarity with them. It is his duty to stay with his people. If all the people decide to go into exile, the pastor can follow his flock. But he cannot save only himself or a minority of profiteers or cowards.

(12) In addition, Christians and their pastors must know how to recognize the hand of the All Powerful in the events which, from time to time, put down the mighty from their thrones and raise up the humble, turning the rich away with empty hands and satisfying the hungry. Today "the world demands tenaciously

and forcefully the recognition of human dignity in all its fullness, the social equality of all classes"[2]. Christians and all men of good will cannot but join this movement, even if they must renounce their privileges and personal fortunes for the benefit of the larger human community. In no respect is the church the protector of the big property owners. With John XXIII, it requires that property be distributed among all, because property has from the beginning a social purpose.[3] Recently, Paul VI recalled the words of St. John: "If someone who has the riches of this world sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (I John 3:17), and the words of St. Ambrose: "The world is given to all, and not only to the rich." (Populorum Progressio 23).

(13) All of the Fathers, both Eastern and Western, repeat the Gospel:

> Share your harvest with your brothers. Share these crops which tomorrow will be rotten. Abominable avarice which would rather let everything rot than give it to the needy! "Who do I hurt", says the miser, "by keeping what belongs to me?" Where do you get it? You are like the man who goes to the theater and wants to prevent anyone else from coming in so that he can watch the performance alone to which all have the right. These are the rich: they have declared themselves masters of the common goods they have hoarded because they were the first occupants. If everyone would keep only enough for his immediate needs and would give what is left over to the needy, wealth and poverty would be abolished ... The bread you save belongs to the hungry. The coat in your closet, to the naked man. The shoes which are rotting in your house, to the man without shoes. The money which you keep to yourself, to the man in misery. Thus you oppress as many people as you could help ... No, it is not your greed that I condemn here, but your refusal to share.
>
> (St. Basil, Homily 6, Against Wealth)

(14) Taking account of some necessities for a certain material progress, the Church for a century has tolerated capitalism with lending at legal interest and its other practices which scarcely conform to the morality of the prophets and the Gospel. But it cannot but rejoice to see the appearance among men of another social system which is less distant from this morality. The Christians of tomorrow should, following the initiative of Paul VI, return the moral values of solidarity and fraternity to their true Christian source (Cf. Ecclesiam Suam). Christians have the obligation to demonstrate "that the true socialism is Christianity completely practiced in the just sharing of goods and fundamental equality"[4]. Far from remaining cool to socialism, we can adhere to it with joy as a form of social life better adapted to our time and conforming more to the spirit of the Gospel. Thus we can avoid the confusion some make between God and religion and the oppressors of the poor and the workers - feudalism, capitalism, imperialism. These inhuman systems have begotten others which, in the attempt to liberate the people, oppress individuals when they fall into totalitarian collectivism and religious persecution. But God and true religion have nothing to do with the various forms of iniquitous Mammon. On the contrary, God and true religion are always with those who seek to further

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2) Council intervention of Patriarch Maximos, October 27, 1964.
3) Mater et Magistra, No. 389-391.
4) Council intervention of Patriarch Maximos IV, September 28, 1965.

a more equitable and brotherly society among all God's children in the great human family.

(15) With joy and pride, the church greets a new humanity in which honor no longer goes to money accumulated in a few hands, but to laborers, workers, and peasants. The church is nothing without him who ceaselessly gives it its being and action, Jesus of Nazareth, who worked with his hands for many years to show the important dignity of workers. "The worker is infinitely superior to all money", as a bishop recalled at the Council.[5] Another bishop, from a socialist country, likewise declared:

> If workers do not succeed in some way in becoming owners of their work, every reform of structures will remain ineffective. Even if workers receive higher wages in some economic systems, they will not be content with this wage increase. They really want to be owners and not sellers of their work. Workers are becoming increasingly aware today that work constitutes a part of the human person. But the human person can neither be sold nor sell himself. All sale or purchase of labor is a sort of slavery ... Human society is making progess in this matter, certainly even in this system which is said to be less sensitive than we to the dignity of the human person, that is, Marxism.
>
> (F. Franic, Split, Yugoslavia
> October 4, 1965)

(16) This is to say that the church rejoices to see within humanity the development of forms of social life in which work finds its true primary place. As Archpriest Borovoy of the World Council of Churches recognized, we were wrong to accommodate ourselves to the pagan legal principles inherited from ancient Rome. Unfortunately, the West has sinned no less in this respect than the East.

> Of all Christian cultures Byzantium is the one which contributed most of all to the mere sanctification of social evil. It took over without objection the entire social inheritance of the pagan world and gave it a sacral anointing. The Civil Law of the pagan Roman Empire was preserved in the guise of ecclesiastical tradition for thousands of years in Byzantium and medieval Europe, and for centuries in Russia from the time (16th century) when our country began to regard itself as the heir of Byzantium.
>
> But that is radically opposed to the social tradition of early Christianity and the Greek fathers, the messianic preaching of our Savior and the whole content of the Old Testament prophets, which never grows old.
>
> (World Council of Churches, July 12, 1966,
> Church and Society Conference, Geneva)

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5) Intervention of Mgr. G. Hakim, Archbishop of Galilee, November 10, 1964.

III. Fidelity to the Word of God

(17) No one should look for any political inspiration in our words. Our only source is the Word of him who spoke by his prophets and apostles. The Bible and the Gospel denounce as sin against God any violation of the dignity of man created in his image. In this necessity of respect for the human person, atheists of good faith today join believers for common service to mankind in the search for justice and peace. We therefore address these words of encouragement to all of these. For all need much courage and strength to succeed at the immense and urgent task which alone can save the Third World from misery and hunger and deliver humanity from the catastrophe of a nuclear war: "No more war, down with arms!"[6]

(18) The people of the poor and the poor of the peoples, in whose midst the Merciful One has placed us as the pastors of a small flock, know from experience that they must count more on themselves and their own power than on the help of the rich. Certainly some rich nations or some rich of the nations give considerable aid to our peoples, but it would be illusory to wait passively for a free conversion of all those about whom our Father Abraham warned: "They will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31). It belongs primarily to the poor peoples and the poor among the peoples to accomplish themselves their own advancement. That they recover confidence in themselves; that they educate themselves, leaving behind illiteracy; that they work diligently to build their destiny; that they train themselves and utilize all the means that modern society places at their disposal - school, transistors, magazines; that they listen to those who can awaken and form the conscience of the masses and especially to the words of their pastors. That their pastors give them the Word of truth and the Gospel of justice in its entirety. That the militant laity of the apostolic movements understand and put into practice the exhortation of Pope Paul VI:

> ... it belongs to the laymen, without waiting passively for orders and directives, to take the initiative freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live. Changes are necessary, basic reforms are indispensable: the laymen should strive resolutely to permeate them with the spirit of the Gospel.
>
> (Populorum Progressio, No. 81)

That, finally, the poor and workers unite because only union creates the power of the poor to demand and promote justice and truth.

(19) The people hunger primarily for truth and justice, and all those charged with their instruction and education should work enthusiastically for it. Certain errors must be dispelled quickly: No, God does not want there to be poor people who are always miserable. Religion is not an opiate for the people. Religion is a force that raises the humble and humbles the proud, which gives bread to the hungry and makes the satisfied hunger. Certainly,

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6) Paul VI at the U.N.

Jesus warned us that there will always be poor among us (John 12:8), but that is because there will always be the rich to monopolize this world's goods and also always certain inequalities due to differences of capacities and other inevitable factors. But Jesus taught us that the second commandment is equal to the first because one cannot love God without loving his fellowman. He warns us that we and all men will be judged by a single word: "I was hungry and you gave me food ... I was the one who was hungry ... " (Matt. 25:31-46). All the great religions and sages of mankind echo this statement. Thus the Koran announces the final trial at which men are submitted to God's judgment: "What is this trial? It is the ransom of the captives, the feeding of the orphan in time of famine ... or of the poor man sleeping on the cold hard ground ... and effecting a law of mercy." (Sour. 90:11-18).

(20) We have the obligation to share our bread and all our goods. If some hoard for themselves that which is necessary for others, public powers must impose the sharing which was not done in good will. Pope Paul VI recalled this in his most recent encyclical:

> If certain landed estates impede the general prosperity because they are extensive, unused or poorly used, or because they bring hardship to peoples or are detrimental to the interests of the country, the common good sometimes demands their expropriation. While giving a clear statement on this, the Council recalled no less clearly that the available revenue is not to be used in accordance with mere whim, and that no place must be given to selfish speculation. Consequently it is unacceptable that citizens with abundant incomes from the resources and activity of their country should transfer a considerable part of this income abroad purely for their own advantage, without care for the manifest wrong they inflict on their country by doing this.
>
> (Populorum Progressio, No. 24)

No longer can foreign wealth be allowed to come to exploit our poor people under the pretext of establishing commerce or industry. Neither is it tolerable that some rich people exploit their own people. This provokes the exasperation of nationalisms which are always regrettable and opposed to true cooperation among the peoples.

(21) What is true of individuals is also true of nations. Unfortunately, there is today no truly world government which can impose justice among the peoples and distribute goods equally. The economic system now operating permits the rich nations to increase their wealth, while giving bits of aid to the poor nations who are becoming proportionately poorer. The poor must therefore demand, with all the legitimate means at their disposal, the establishment of a world government in which all peoples, without exception, would be represented. This government would be able to demand, indeed even impose, a just distribution of goods, the indispensable condition of peace. (Cf. Pacem in Terris, No. 137; Populorum Progressio, No. 28).

(22) Within each nation, workers have the right and obligation to join in real unions in order to demand and defend their rights: a fair wage, paid vacations, social security, family allocations, participation in the management of the business. It is not enough that these rights be recognized legally on paper. The laws must be applied, and it behooves governments to exercise their

powers in this area in the service of workers and the poor. Governments must work to bring an end to the class conflict which, contrary to popular opinion, the rich too often have set in motion and continued to conduct against the workers by exploiting them with insufficient salaries and inhuman working conditions. Money for a long time has slyly conducted a subversive war throughout the world, murdering entire peoples. It is time that the poor people, supported and guided by their legitimate governments, effectively defend their rights to life. God revealed himself to Moses by saying: "I have seen the miserable state of my people ... I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers ... I mean to deliver them." (Exodus 3:7-8). Finally, Jesus took on himself all humanity to lead it to eternal life. Here below, the preparation is social justice, the highest form of brotherly love. When by his resurrection Christ freed mankind from death, he brought all human liberation to its eternal fullness.

(23) To all we also address this word of the Gospel which some of us[7] spoke to our people last year, moved by the same concern and hope which is shared by all the people of the Third World:

> We exhort you to remain firm and fearless, as evangelical ferment in the world of labor, confident in Christ's words, "Stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand" (Luke 21:28).

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7) Manifesto of the bishops of North-East Brazil, Récife, July 14, 1966.

* * * * *

The Signatories:

Helder Camara, Archbishop of Récife, Pernambuco, Brazil;
Jean-Baptiste Da Mota e Albuquerque, Archbishop of Vitoria, Espirito Santo, Brazil;
Luis Gonzaga Fernandes, Auxiliary Bishop of Vitoria, Espirito Santo, Brazil;
Georges Mercier, Bishop of Laghouat, Sahara, Algeria;
Michel Darmancier, Bishop of Wallis and Futuna, South Pacific;
Armand Hubert, Apostolic Vicar, Héliopolis, Egypt, U.A.R.;
Angel Cuniberti, Apostolic Vicar of Florencia, Colombia;
Sévérino Mariano de Aguiar, Bishop of Pesqueira, Pernambuco, Brazil;
Frank Franic, Bishop of Split, Yugoslavia;
Francisco Austregesilo de Mesquita, Bishop of Afogados de Ingazeira, Pernambuco, Brazil
Grégoire Haddad, Melchite Auxiliary Bishop of Beirut, Lebanon;
Manuel Pereira da Costa, Bishop of Campina Grande, Paraïba, Brazil;
Carlo van Melckebeke, Bishop of Ning Hsia, China;
Antonio Bastita Fragoso, Bishop of Crateüs, Ceara, Brazil;
Etienne Loosdregt, Bishop of Vientiane, Laos.

CHRISTIANITY IN TODAY'S WORLD

A Marxist Response to the World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva 1966

by

Dr. Ladislav Prokupek, Czechoslovakia.

(A longer version of this article was published in Nova mysl, the theoretical and political journal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia, vol. XXI, no. 10, Prague, May 16, 1967.)

Even a summary list of the problems discussed by the 1966 Geneva World Conference on Church and Society shows that these problems are also relevant for us, and thus merit Marxist analysis, because they raise questions of broad political significance. The attitude of today's Christianity toward these fundamental social questions cannot be a matter of indifference to Marxists - although we seek solutions from another, ideologically different basis - because the political decisions and stance of many Christian churches, groups, and individuals are influenced by Christian thinking in this area. We should not over-estimate the significance of the Church and Society Conference in Geneva. Its conclusions were sent to the World Council of Churches and all other churches as recommendations only; therefore we cannot assume that they will significantly change the thinking of many Christians whose attitudes toward e.g. ownership of the means of production, formation of society, and the understanding of human freedom are one-sidedly pro-Western. It would also be wrong to overlook the importance of the conference, however. In the first place, Christians still number about 800,000,000 people in the world, a significant political force. Second, Christians live in all parts of the world, experience all the scientific-technical and social processes and revolutions, actively or passively accommodate to these changes, influence the societies they live in, and are influenced by their societies and their problems. Underrating these facts would blind us to the inner processes of contemporary Christianity and depreciate the objective conditions under which these inner processes have emerged. In addition, both the Second Vatican Council and the Geneva Conference have shown that in present-day Christianity a struggle is going on between politically and ideologically conservative forces, which all Christianity with the politics of the Western powers, and other forces, which see the position of Christianity in today's world realistically and do not wish to be allied with any political power bloc, though they do not want to remain passive observers of the search for solutions to the world's pressing problems. This second group is therefore interested in a real dialogue, even with ideological and political camps to which it is opposed.

The Position of the Church in Today's World

As Marxists, we view the contradiction between the world which is developing along a progressively non-religious path, on the one hand, and religion, on the other, as a deterministic development of human society moving progressively beyond the mythology of its own historic thinking. Some Christians also see this opposition, from their own ideological standpoints. They recognize that Christianity's task in the world today is made more difficult by the non-religious development of the world which is changing the religious conceptions of men in all spheres of their lives. The style of human life is changing; old, traditional links and family traditions are broken; dislike for metaphysics and everything traditional is gaining ground. While this process affects first of all the churches in highly developed industrial nations, where the scientific-technological revolution is under way, the consequences of revolutionary social change are found throughout the world and in every part of Christianity. This puts the Christian community in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, it is trying to follow the path of the ecumenical movement, toward unification of all the forces within world Christianity in order to counter more effectively this process of disappearing religiosity. This process moves toward objective unification of Christianity. On the other hand, the objective development of human society in various parts of the world is deepening Christian disunity.

The world today is divided into at least three major parts. They have characteristics in common, as well as those which separate. Besides the capitalist world, there is the socialist world and the so-called third world of African, Asian, and Latin American countries. It would be a fundamental error to ignore this fact, because there are Christians and churches in all these parts of the world, living and working under very different social, political, and economic conditions which influence them decisively. The churches in each part of the world have their own important problems in confronting the reality in which they live. We can see very clearly that further progress of the ecumenical movement toward the unity of all Christians is dependent on the total process of world unification by means of deepening scientific, technical, economic, and political cooperation. Significant steps in this direction are peaceful co-existence and disarmament. The speeches and discussions about Christian existence in "the technical and social revolutions of our time" produced many interesting and stimulating ideas, remarkable for a Christian forum. The primary importance of technology and science in development of the ideological and political realms of society was recognized, and reference was made to the sociological dimension in which technical development creates new possibilities for emancipating man and society from the tyranny of physical labor. Technological development, however, can have both good and bad consequences for society. How a society chooses to apply technology makes a great deal of difference. Noteworthy in this connection were the statements by Prof. J. Ellul, who addressed himself at length to a number of questions about relations between technology and society. He found that all the issues arising from their reciprocal interaction have not yet been researched. While technology knows no limits, there is a tendency to restrict its development and effects to the framework of the old social orders. The growth of technology makes it possible - in the political, scientific, and social sphere - to construct a further development of

society on the basis of a suitable combination of ideology and technology, to avoid confusing short-range goals with long-range developments. Therefore it is necessary that technological development acquire a revolutionary character.

It is noteworthy that many of the conference speakers, in both formal presentations and discussions, came close to the Marxist conception of directing the scientific-technological revolution, as an instrument of social progress which can best be utilized effectively in a socialist social order. The early sessions of the conference were nevertheless dominated by the Western interpretation of this problem. The point of departure was an analysis of "the technological revolution" in highly developed capitalist countries, without reference to scientific analysis of this process elsewhere. The conference also overlooked the negative consequences of "technological revolution" in capitalist society, even though reference was made to technological unemployment (which does not have to produce material deprivation, because a situation can gradually emerge in which a small part of the population can produce enough for the whole society to live). Also dealt with insufficiently were the psychological and ethical problems of people who are unqualified to adapt to changed conditions of production, and therefore are driven to the fringes of society, feel inadequate, and lack perspective on life. It was not even mentioned that such people are found already in highly developed capitalist countries, and not just in the slums which pose a problem for the U.S.A. The conference also ignored the question of how Christian universality is to be achieved today, despite the variety of political systems, amid disparate levels of industrial production, technology, and scientific knowledge, in varied countries and cultures with plural ethical and ethnic characteristics. Thus the conference did not take up questions which preclude this universal conception of Christianity in our cultural area. Neither did it deal with the fact that many Christian churches in capitalist countries still have not solved the problem of their relation to the state, a carry-over from the so-called Constantinian era. Thus some churches still perform a service function in "Christian Democrat" systems and parties (cf. the Federal Republic of Germany), or support the institution of chaplaincy in armies which are parts of military-political blocs. A number of other problems relevant to judgments about the over-all stance of Christianity and its universality in the problematic of today's world were left unsolved.

The Position of Christianity in the Social Revolutions

It is no wonder that most delegates from developing countries understood very well the Marxist theory of class struggle and saw revolution as a suitable instrument to effect revolutionary transformation in their countries. It is also understandable that the Christians who live under these circumstances interpret Christianity very differently to the Christians in so-called Western Christian civilization. In developing countries we find an interpretation of Christianity which is similar - taking account of the different conditions and assumptions of the twentieth century - to the conception we know from the Hussite revolutionary

period, especially in the stress put on the Bible's social emphasis. They say themselves that:

> "All of our encouraging theological reflections will not be of much help to the new revolutionary unless they are set within this concrete revolutionary situation and related to the questions arising there. Our first theological task is to take that step."[1]

The Latin American theologians who spoke in the conference all underlined the Christian's duty to support guerrilla-partisan struggles against the ruling exploitative and "Herodian" junta in Latin America. They evaluated positively the significance of Marxism in deepening the revolution's social dimension. Some spoke positively of Cuba and the People's Republic of China as models for solving their own problems. The American professor, Richard Shaull, upset many of his colleagues and fellow-Americans and many representatives of churches in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, and England, when he spoke of his long years of experience in Latin America:

> "..that a significant number of young people today, from widely different backgrounds, who are committed to the construction of a more just and human society, have been pushed to a position in which this makes sense to them. As a result, they are convinced that technology can contribute, in the long run, to human well-being and fulfillment only as it is challenged by revolution and thus choose revolution as the only road they can take in working for the future of man."[2]

Further, the course of the conference revealed that the situation in certain countries, especially in Africa and Latin America, is gradually ripening toward revolutionary change, that a broad front of revolutionary forces is in process of formation, and that the Christians in these countries will not be excluded if they succeed in achieving a re-orientation in the new situation. Many of them have recommended such a new orientation to the centers of the world church, which gives many of them financial support, and they have given convincing evidence (especially in some Asian and African countries) that where the churches have opposed or still oppose revolutionary change, Christianity risks losing its already limited influence.

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1. R. Schaull: "The revolutionary challenge to church and theology"
+ 2. Documents of the 1966 World Conference on Church and Society, No. C.A. 16

The Christian Social Theory of the "Responsible Society"

In social theory, the Geneva conference continued what was started by the Life and Work conferences in Stockholm 1925 and Oxford 1937. While both conferences were concerned with the social teaching of ecumenical Christianity, each had a characteristic accent. At Stockholm the main problem was to direct the activity of churches and the ecumenical movement toward uniting the world which had been divided by World War I and the socialist revolution in Russia. Oxford faced a world situation already determined by the existence of fascism and the threat of war. More directly, the Church and Society Conference was in the line of the post-war Assemblies of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam 1948, Evanston 1954, and New Delhi 1961, where the Christian social theory of the so-called "responsible society" was developed. The "responsible society" was worked out to give the World Council of Churches an effective instrument in the churches' social activity and guiding principles for their policy. The report of the Second Assembly declared:

> "Responsible society" is not an alternative social or political system, but a criterion by which we judge all existing social orders and at the same time a standard to guide us in the specific choices we have to make."[1]

The theory of the "responsible society" in fact did not offer a third alternative between the socialist and capitalist social systems. The criteria of a "responsible society," by which all social systems were to be measured, show that this was not even necessary. The passages which refer to the state, to private enterprise, and changes within capitalism demonstrate in many places that the criteria of a "responsible society" are criteria of Western capitalist society. The theory of the "responsible society" was developed in the time of tension between East and West and served as an instrument of the cold war against the socialist countries. Since that time it has undergone certain changes, but has not completely disappeared from the ecumenical movement.

In his address at the opening of the Geneva conference, World Council General Secretary Dr. W. A. Visser't Hooft listed five specific points to which he felt the conference should address itself. Even though his speech reflected a partial departure from the old conception of a "responsible society" and called for it to be interpreted in terms of world-wide social responsibility for just solutions to the urgent problems between industrially highly developed countries and developing nations, we must still reject this new, improved version of a "responsible society." The call for development of a social theory in agreement with the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is enough to indicate that the new interpretation still rests on the old foundations. The social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is founded, namely, on the Thomistic notion of a "natural law" under which men live and which includes both the right to private ownership of the means of production and a hierarchical order of human society corresponding to naturally given human inequality. On such

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1. "The Evanston Report" - The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1954 - page 113, para. 7.

a basis the appeal to unify the inner lines of social ethics of various schools in the ecumenical movement is utopian, for the simply reason that this social teaching is not acceptable to all the churches and Christians in the socialist countries.

Other delegates also opposed the formulation of a social ethic which would declare any particular social system to be "Christian". Prof. J. Tinbergen from the Netherlands spoke of two systems in today's world, societies with central planning and societies with free enterprise; without giving priority to either, he assumed the necessity of their peaceful co-existence. This is a very different view than that found in Schema XIII of the Second Vatican Council, "The Church in the Modern World." There the old conception, private ownership of the means of production as the basis of any just social system, was retained, in spite of noteworthy changes which the Council produced especially in international policy. The Church and Society Conference refrained from telling believers that one social order is Christian and therefore binding for them, and so left them freedom of choice. This does not mean, however, that the leadership of various religious associations, groups, and churches has not tried to influence believers in the direction of a "responsible society". West German Bishop Otto Dibelius, a president of the World Council of Churches in Cold War days, criticized the Geneva conference in the West Berlin publication Die Kirche. Among other things he said, "God preserve us from the theology of revolution that was called for in Geneva . . . . The World Council of Churches should keep to the goal of a 'responsible society!." (Junge Kirche 11, 1966). It seems that some factions of ecumenical Christianity would like to use this conception of a "responsible society" as a bulwark against a "theology of revolution."

The Christian and the Marxist

A Marxist View of Dialogue

by

Konrad Farner

The organisers of your conference have invited me to speak on the theme "A Marxist View of Dialogue". The dialogue in question is, I assume, the dialogue between the Christian and the Marxist. It will not be possible in the hour assigned me to do more than select a few points which seem to me to be fundamental to this extremely complex and many-sided problem. Much will have to be omitted and some aspects merely touched on. In fact, all I can do is to offer a few provisional comments and point out a few basic presuppositions.

First of all allow me to introduce myself, not in order to indulge my vanity, but in order to prevent any possible shocks during the course of my lecture!

Absolute clarity and clear definition

Since 1923 I have been a member of the Communist Party of Switzerland, today known as the Swiss Labour Party. For some years I have been a member of its Central Committee. At the time when the Party was still illegal, I took part in political and social struggles. I do not regard myself, then, as a "parlour Communist" for whom Marxism is merely a theory - if in fact it is ever possible for anyone to experience Marxism merely theoretically, which I deny, since Marxism demands the closest unity between theory and practice. Similarly, unless one is a dialectician it is impossible to comprehend the dialectical realism of Marxism - or, as Hegel put it, to understand dialectic, you must be a dialectician yourself.

Again, I hold no brief for eclecticism nor for the sort of global humanism offered for sale cheap in some "moral" emporia nowadays. I am in favour of absolute clarity and clear distinctions. But this itself calls for a quite specific attitude towards one's partner in dialogue; it forces one to take him seriously, to listen to his arguments, but also to expect him to be equally unambiguous. In the case of the Christian-Marxist dialogue one must be able to assume that the Christian really lives his Christianity in practice, that his faith is not merely theoretical and passive, not a half-hearted Sunday Christianity, not a conventional church-taxpayer's Christianity, but a real, living Christianity which embraces and engages the whole person and is therefore lived. Obvious this already considerably reduces the numbers on both sides. But I am convinced, and nearly forty years of practical experience substantiates this conviction, that for both the Christian and the Marxist a dialogue can be fruitful only if these conditions are fulfilled, only if neither partner can be accused of being half-hearted.

There are many other conditions for genuine dialogue, of course; for example, it cannot be a question of a dialogue between an accuser and an accused; it is not a matter of proving that the other side is completely wrong or even guilty, for both sides are in the wrong. Otherwise the condition of the world today would not be so precarious. Both parties are guilty; the only difference is one of time: Christianity has had nearly 2,000 zears' history (some of it extremely shameful) whereas Marxism has only 100 years' history to answer for (some of it equally shameful).

Charity is obsolete

Clearly then, the question is not "Which is the guilty party?" but "Where is your brother?" This does not mean the brother in any

sentimental, romantic sense, nor does it mean a missionary zeal to save souls; nor should it be understood in the sense of St. Martin sharing his cloak with the leprous beggar. It is rather in the sense of St. Benedict who brought the land under cultivation, or of St. Theresa of Avila who set up her Carmel in the heart of the slums. The time is over now when, in the basis of a social hierarchy backed by natural law, the charity of the rich could be reckoned as a Christian virtue smoothing their path to heaven. The time has come for the Christian to redeem his promissory notes, presented to him for payment today by the exploited and by the coloured races. Today the question is not one of giving the beggar half your cloak so that he may no longer freeze; it is rather to end beggary altogether. For the first time in human history this is possible today, and will be tomorrow on a world-wide scale, thanks to modern technology with its new methods of production and distribution. "Charity" is therefore largely obsolete. The Marxist regards charity merely as first-aid, not as a cure. Certainly, bleeding wounds must be attended to, but at the same time the whole body must be healed. This is why the Marxist is bound to have reservations about Danilo Dolci or Abbé Pierre and even Tullio Vinay, however much he respects them as genuinely Christian personalities. The same applies to the new communities like Taizé which are really pioneers in a new Christianity, but which only influence a relatively small field as far as social ethics are concerned.

Genuine dialogue also requires of both partners in discussion greater modesty about their own point of view and more interest in the other approach. Both should have more courage when they are asked questions which they themselves are unable to answer immediately, and should not resort so readily to ready-made answers. They should also put radical questions to themselves, not only to their partner in the dialogue. And they should be far less anxious and afraid. I have never understood how a Christian could ever be anxious, in view of his assurance of salvation. Was St. Francis afraid? Catherine of Siena, Ignatius, Charles de Foucault, Teilhard de Chardin? Christians who betray signs of anxiety as partners in dialogue, or even issue strong warnings against any form of dialogue, remind me of Marxist official who express their answer not with their brains but with biased simplifications, insinuations and ultimately (if possible) official compulsion. But there are Christian officials of this kind too, so neither side can cast any stones.

Again, genuine dialogue is poles apart from missionary propaganda and proselytizing. Nor is it apologetics, in the sense of traditional Christian catechism or of official Marxist textbooks; only in the sense of complete openness towards the partner in discussion, a readiness to learn from him. Thus it is simultaneously criticism and self-criticism.

New knowledge: new understanding

Moreover genuine dialogue demands informed knowledge of both sides, knowledge of one's own position and of the opposite one. It is not absolutely essential for the Marxist to have read the Summae of St. Thomas Aquinas or Barth's Church Dogmatics, nor for the Christian to have read Marx's Das Kapital or Lenin's Materialism and Empirio Criticism. But each should understand the other's ultimate concern and the basis for it, and the reasons for what is real and possible. The Marxist should realise that "the Church waters down the message of Christ"

(to quote Hans Urs von Balthasar) and that it is obliged to do so because the wine of the Christian message represents far too potent a concentrate for men; how many of them have got as far as loving their neighbour as themselves? The Marxist should not dismiss this dilution of the Christian message with an ironic, superior, complacent smile. Does he not also water down many principles? As a dialectical realist he should try to understand. The Christian should realise that (to quote Ladislaus Boros) "the basic insight of Marxism is very close to certain basic truths of Christianity"; he should also realise that (in the words of the Catholic, Albert Massiczek) "the Marxist is one who seeks to realise a purer humanity".

There are other conditions to be fulfilled if fruitful dialogue is to be possible. The Christian, on his side, must not think of Marxism simply as a philosophical system, or even as simply an economic and social system, or simply as a way of regarding and changing the world. He must recognise that Marxism is a world-view in which philosophy, anthropology, sociology, politics and economics are all integrated. In addition Marxism (being subject to its own scientific categories) is constantly developing, changing, expanding, with fresh differentiations; it is not a fixed system of rigid dogmas; although it has sometimes been treated as such, this is (and will always be) contrary to the very essence of Marxism.

On the other hand the Marxist must note that the Christian message is not identical with the visible Church; that the Christian faith is not belief in a world-view either (this assumption is one of the chief misconceptions of the non-Christian world, as well as of Christendom itself). The Christian faith is faith in justification as the assurance of salvation and so a matter of divine grace. In this respect there is no theocratic knowledge, since knowledge and faith operate at completely different levels. If Christians had made this heart of the Christian message clearer, it would have been spared centuries of controversy with science (as science became more and more independent)- a controversy in which the Church has been far from successful. Many of our debates today would prove unnecessary if both partners to the dialogue were more aware of this heart of the Christian message.

Again, the Marxist must realise that Christianity is not tied to any specific form of religion and that (as the Protestant Bonhoeffer and the Catholic Balthasar both assert) Christianity can even be lived without religion at all; the Christian message can be proclaimed without traditional "religion". Then, in this respect at least, the criticism of religion in the Marxist classics will become meaningless.

No more justification for poverty

There is another respect in which the Marxist criticism of religion can become meaningless. In the words of Marx, Christianity is "an expression of man's real suffering and a protest against it". Religious life thus has two mutually contradictory aspects: on the one hand, it is a passive, resigned reflection of human suffering; on the other hand, it is an active hope of overcoming human suffering. Thanks to modern means of production, Christianity today is confronted with a concrete choice between passive reflection about social suffering and active conquest of social suffering. If Christianity decides unequivocally in favour of action, comprehensive action, even revolutionary action (please don't be alarmed!), then an important element in the

Marxist criticism of religion becomes groundless, since this criticism is directed primarily not against God and His existence (this distinguishes it from the bourgeois free-thinker movement) but against the man whose faith in God (perhaps a mistaken one) leads him to accept social and personal misery, and even to justify it. It should be clearly stated that this justification of misery, backed even by appeal to natural law, has been the great blight which has marred the entire history of the Church from the Epistles to the Ephesians (6:5) down to the Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno of 1931, where we read: "The worker should accept without complaint the place which Divine Providence has assigned to Him". Johann Baptist Metz rightly says: "Christians have been too ready to console the poor and enslaved with the prospect of heaven". It is up to the Christian to remove this ground for Marxist criticism of religion.

A new Christian Social Ethic: Populorum Progressio

The Marxist must realise that this is now a possibility. But he will only do so, and rightly, when Christianity produces clear proof of this on a wide scale, in other words, when the Marxist transformation of society finds itself in competition with Christian rivalry in the field of social ethics. It is not only the Marxist who must realise that this is possible; above all the Christian himself must do so. The Christian must realise that what is required is a structural change in property relationships, in the ownership of the main means of production, these being the material basis of society. The Christian must realise that the change required means transforming an economy based on personal profit into an economy based on collective need. The Encyclical Populorum Progressio is a first theoretical step in the Catholic world, a late beginning certainly, nevertheless a beginning, like the Second Vatican Council, and the World Conference of Church and Society held in Geneva in 1966 when (to the alarm of bourgeois Christians) the word "revolution" unexpectedly took a central place. It remains true, however, that (as Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger of Bavaria, the new President of the Council of the EKD, has said) "Whevever the Church wants to be up-to-date it always arrives five minutes too late!" All the social Encyclicals, ever since Leo XIII, have (to put it mildly) arrived "five minutes too late".

The Christian must realise much more acutely that the traditional social reforms change things very little. He must realise that, from the standpoint of world history, we stand at the beginning of a new, deeper, more radical social awareness, one which calls for fundamental changes in economic structure, in ownership-relationships. The challenge of the Catholic historian De Rosa, on the occasion of a culture conference of "Democrazia Cristiana" at Lucca on April 28th, 1967, may still be only an isolated voice in the ranks of that party, but it is nevertheless symptomatic of the present situation: "Christianity must rid itself of reformism because reformism is conservative."

Reforms, by all means! But reforms do not effect a cure, they are only palliatives. The real solution is not reformed capitalism, nor"organised capitalism" (as the new term so beautifully expresses it!); the real solution is socialism. If you will forgive me for saying it so bluntly, "organised capitalism" is simply a new form of fascism, i,e, centralised monopoly capitalism with a centralised organisation of state power to protect this "organised capitalism". Many economic, social, political and even ideological facts in the sphere of world

capitalism today point very clearly to this. We have here the alternative to socialism-communism. This is the choice also for the Christian, however much he refuses to face it or is tempted to call it an over-simplification or vainly seeks a compromise which is not ultimately anchored in previous social Encyclicals. These Encyclicals, as we have already remarked, are unfortunately not "avant-garde".

This certainly does not mean that the cause of Christianity is, and always will be, a rearguard action, as many Marxists think and even hope. The ecumenical conference in Geneva last summer is clear proof of the contrary. The slogan "revolution" was, so to speak, in the air, according to Hans ten Doornkaap, a delegate at that conference, whose report appeared in the far from revolutionary Neue Zürcher Zeitung. I quote: "It is in the first place a clear abandonment of all theological social ethics bent on maintaining the existing traditional social forms. If Christianity still has any chance left it will only be by a resolute revolutionary attitude". The report continues: "the possibility of active participation by Christians in the violent overthrow of existing orders was explicitly reckoned with ... In itself this is nothing new ... What is new is the attempt to make revolution the main basic principle ... One of the tasks of theological social ethics will be to find, not 'rules of play' for such revolutions, but a real concept of revolutionary action, and to give this concept concrete form, with or without a situation-ethic."

Marxism - Christianity - Communism

Therefore the Christian, especially the Christian theologian, of whatever confession, must enter into a thorough confrontation with socialism and communism. Not with an apologetic intention, in the old sense, in defence of antiquated values, nor as a polemical theology (if I may use this term here) but in the form of active participation and entering into possession. "Socialism brings more justice to the world than the previous social structures have done. The human significance of work, the abolition of class divisions, the building of socialism - we are under an unconditional obligation to examine all this sincerely and frankly" (writes the Jesuit Father, Gonzales Ruiz, one of the courageous leaders of the Young Catholic Workers in Spain).

Theology must enter into discussion with socialism-communism, not with any fear that it may possibly lose something, but in the hope of being able to gain something, even something of supreme Christian importance. Admittedly, it will lose something in the process: bourgeois Christianity which identifies Christian with "middle-class" or more explicitly with the propertied middle-class. The stupid and often malicious reaction of certain bourgeois capitalist newspapers, parading as Christian, to the Encyclical Polulorum Progressio (this modest first step) is characteristic of the present situation. If the Christian wishes to play a vital part in the future, he will have to cease being bourgeois and become a citizen instead.

The Marxist, for his part, must adjust himself to the historical fact that Communism in the sense of a social system is not a Marxist invention, still less a Marxist monopoly for shaping the future. As an ideal form of society, as the "great hope", Communism is already found in Solon and in Plato; it has also been an important element in Christian history from the days of the Early Church via Chrysostom of Byzantium down to the present-day Christian communities, even though

pushed to the circumference by the main stream of Church history since Constantine and frequently decried. As we have already said, the communist idea in the form of a visible Kingdom of God has for the most part been violently persecuted by the official Church as heresy and only tolerated in the monasteries and convents in the form of small communities integrated into the Church under strict safeguards.

Communism is not contrary to the Christian message; it cannot be for, on the one hand, the Christian message is not tied to any particular social order, still less to any particular property system and on the other hand because communism, like socialism (but unlike Marxism) is not a world-view but simply a social order with a particular concept of property. Christianity existed at the time of the slave-system in antiquity, in the age of feudal serfdom, under capitalism exploitation; it can also exist in the age of socialism-communism. Communism can be Marxist, or Christian, or Moslem, or Buddhist; as has been emphasised, it is not tied to any one world-view or religion. Indeed, Communism can be explicitly Christian; its concern is anything but non-Christian or anti-Christian. In adopting a hostile attitude to Communism down to the time of Pius XI: the Vatican was expressly attacking a Communism which was atheistic in tendency, not communism as a property-system. Moreover, the only existing concrete embodiment of the communist property-system is to be found in the Christian and Buddhist monasteries. What is being built up in states ruled by Marxist parties is merely socialism as the prelude to communism.

Is the Christian afraid of losing his faith, his life as a Christian, because of communism? Is the Marxist afraid of losing his view of history, his apparent monopoly of communism, because of a renewed Christianity? What strange anxieties, when we consider the world as it is, when we face the enormous tasks involved in changing this world! What has happened to the sovereignty of faith for the Christian? Where is the Marxist's sovereignty of science? What mistaken, timorous, anxious, defensive attitudes!

The "Great Hope" as the "Hope of Earth"

We must, of course, keep constantly and clearly in mind that Christian eschatology, as represented for example by Leonard Ragaz's idea of the Kingdom of God or Teilhard de Chardin's vision of the future as a communist social order, is supernaturally orientated, whereas the Marxist goal of a classless comunist society free from exploitation is directed wholly towards this world, and is entirely "innerweltlich". The two perspectives are therefore on different levels, as far as the "Last Things" are concerned. The Christian "hope of heaven" (pardon this expression) does not rule out the "hope of earth" (to use Teilhard de Chardin's term). On the contrary, the question is whether this "hope of earth" is not to be regarded as an indispensable preliminary, an essential indication? I have already suggested that one of the most important, perhaps the most important, task of the Christian today is to demonstrate that this is so.

For it must be recognised that the "great Hope" constantly reappearing in human history in the form of the lost Golden Age, or the expectation of Paradise, or the idea of a Kingdom of God, or a theistic or atheist Utopia, is a vital part of Christian as well as of Marxist anthropology, and that neither Christianity nor Marxism is conceivable without "hope". Jurgen Moltmann's "theology of hope" is just as

symptomatic of man's yearning today for a better order of society as Ernst Bloch's "principle of hope". The Marxist "principle of hope" (incidentally this is not identical with what Bloch says) contains by logical necessity far more, since in addition to Communism it also includes Revolution. We have to ask whether the Christian "theology of hope" should not be widened to include a "theology of Communism" and a "theology of Revolution". In other words, hope today has Communism as its social goal and Revolution as its means of achieving that goal politically and socially. If the Christian wants to continue to play an active rôle in history, if he wishes to have a real part in shaping the society of the future, then he cannot evade a thorough study of these two phenomena as the theory and practice which are going to determine the shape of the world of the future. Again, if the confrontation is not to be merely a matter of apologetics and defence, then he must seek to integrate these two phenomena.

One of the tasks of the Christian is to look again at his own history and re-think it. That history, from Constantine down to the present day, has been primarily a history of restoration and even of reaction, of alliance with the ruling powers of this world, condemning any rebellion on the part of the oppressed. The Christian must re-examine this very questionable history of the visible Church. Indeed, he must write a completely new history of Christianity, a revolutionary history. He must ask himself whether Christian existence does not in fact mean revolutionary existence, and this not in a merely theoretical sense.

The Marxist too must re-examine more soberly, more closely, these two fundamental elements in his own world-view. He must rid himself of the tendency to idealise, idolise and mythologise the Revolution and Communism; he must be more sober, more accurate, more "nuancé" in his analyses. He must learn to think in terms of world-history, less narrowly, less in terms of today. He must realise that complete revolutions, like the building up of Socialism, cannot be established overnight, but requires the contribution of generations; that we are not yet on the eve of Communism. He will also need to realise that, while it is not too difficult to restructure the material basis of society, to change the mental superstructure, especially the social consciousness, constitutes one of the most difficult and protracted problems of human history.

The Marxist must realise that, while material change and mental change are dialectically closely interrelated, the former does not automatically produce the latter. Again, the relation between "being" and "consciousness" is anything but mechanical; it is an exceptionally complex constant reciprocal process. The Christian must realise that a spiritual change is not enough - the history of Christianity shows this clearly - because such a change presupposes the reconstruction of the material foundations of society. The Marxist must also realise that at the international level he cannot effect the change on his own; in countries hitherto Christian change cannot be brought about without the Christians. The Christian must also realise that, on his own, he cannot bring about a fundamental change, least of all through "healing by the Spirit". Both Christian and Marxist depend on one another wherever Christianity has existed for any length of time. Still more must it be emphasised that what both are concerned for is not simply that people should have a higher standard of living, but that they should <u>be better</u>.

The obvious practical starting-point

To avoid any ideological confusion or illusions, and in order to establish a clear starting-point, we must add this. The Marxist cannot be a Christian, since he rejects all forms of supernaturalism; he must continue to be a Communist because it is an essential part of his world-view that Communism is the social goal. The Christian, for his part, cannot be a Marxist, since the heart of the Christian message (i.e. the grace of God) is anchored in the supernatural. But he can still be a Communist (although he does not have to be) since Communism as an earthly social order is not anti-Christian.

The Christian and Revolution: the alternative of history

Everything said so far represents simply a first essential preliminary for dialogue between the Christian and the Marxist; no more than a preliminary! Basically it amounts to this: a clear theoretical position making practice possible. For a dialogue without practical consequences is for the Marxist a mirage, something which does not bind him (in view of his principle "no practice without theory, no theory without practice"). The practical consequence means, for the Marxist, co-operation in changing society; it means (don't be alarmed!) revolutionary practice. For the political and social Revolution is at the door, indeed has already pushed the door open all over the world. Not in Switzerland and the countries around it, of course, which (as bourgeois capitalist andbourgeois Christian Western Europe) are living today in the back-room of history. But Western Europe ceased long ago to constitute the world; the position today is very different. Today Revolution no longer stems solely from Moscow; it springs from many different points, from Peking, Havanna, Algeria; it has become polycentric. It can take the form of barricade-fighting, guerrilla action, or even the form of enlightenment through intellectual discussion, or of political, trade-union and co-operative organisation. It can take other forms completely unknown to us today; it can produce new structures in the building up of Socialism with which we are still not familiar.

Unquestionably Revolution is on the agenda today all over the world. So is Counter-Revolution, since no ruling propertied class ever volunarily relinquished its privileges. Whether we live in Greece, in Vietnam, in France or in Argentina, the alternative confronts us: Revolution or Counter-Revolution. The Christian has to make his choice, in the same way that the Marxist has made his choice from the outset, on the basis of his view of history.

To both of us applies the statement made by Fidel Castro a few weeks ago at the Havanna Conference of the Organisation for Latin American Solidarity: "What distinguishes the true from the pseudo-revolutionary is his decision to take action." This action is not necessarily armed action; it can, as we have seen, be expressed through social and political struggle, through manifestations and demonstrations, through enlightenment and education.

It can therefore be said that many Christians have already decided in favour of Revolution, and as far as I can see Christians are increasingly doing so. I recall the speech made by the Nigerian, Bole Ige, in Geneva, o what is happ ning in Spain and South America. I think of the priest, Camillo Torres, shot by government troops as a guerrilla leader and today the secret saint of the poor, exploited people of Bolivia.

I think of the address given by the Nobel Prizewinner Dr. Martin Luther King in Riverside Church, New York, on April 4th last year, in which he said: "All over the globe men are in revolt against the old social system of exploitation and oppression. From the womb of a shattered world-order, new orders of justice and equality are being born. The men of earth, barefoot and naked, are rising as never before ... If we wish to put ourselves on the right side in this world Revolution, then we must as a nation experience a radical reversal of values. This is my firm conviction. We are confronted with the blatant contrast between poverty and wealth ..." We should also remember the worker priests in France and their letter of June 1964 to the Episcopate ... I personally recall discussions with Catholic and Protestant theologians, where Communism as the objective was no longer discussed because it was already taken for granted, and the discussion concerned joint action. Fundamentally, therefore, Communism is not an alternative to Christianity, as many "yesterday Christians" and "yesterday Marxists" (of whom there are not a few) think. It is one social possibility for Christianity; probably it will soon be the only possibility (please don't be alarmed).

Dialogue between Christian and Marxist must accordingly concern itself in the first place with Socialism-Communism. In my view, the question of God, the Church, supernaturalism, transcendence, theism and atheism, is not our main theme today. That question can indeed be an escape from the reality of the present world. It will remain in the cussion, of course, if only so that we should learn to know one another more intimately, both as thinkers and as human beings. But it is only after society has received a new basis, namely socialism, that this question will become the great intellectual theme, especially of anthropology, of humanism. When society has been largely liberated from material these great questions may even become the most urgent and pressing concern of all.

Martyr-Church and religious persecution:
renewed Christianity and renewed Marxism

Escape from the world and fear of the world, even escape into martyrdom, will then become superfluous. Highly as I esteem Balthasar as a significant theological thinker, his new "theology of a new martyrdom" (pardon the term), which seems to amount to a longing for the martyr-church, seems to be an escape of this kind, an escape into self-centred striving for salvation, as part of late-bourgeois extreme individualism. History has never been made by martyrs and pillar-saints; perhaps not even salvation-history. If I had to choose today between the attitudes of two great Christians of the past, I would incline more to the action of Theresa of Avila than to the contemplation of John of the Cross. If I had to choose between two great Catholic theologians of our time, I would incline more to Rahner than to Balthasar, although as a pupil of Barth I try to understand them both. But it is no longer possible to go back, because the Revolution and the Counter-Revolution have in great measure already begun; more than ever before man stands in the world, more than ever before he has an obligation to the world; this applies also to the Christian man.

To revert to the martyr-Church. Here Christian and Marxist are faced with new insights, experiences and necessities. The Christian for his part must adopt as his own the view expressed by Cardinal König about atheism, urging the Christian in countries under Communist Party rule to

demonstrate that his religious life does not act as a brake but rather gives him more energy to cooperate with others in changing society than atheism can generate. The Marxist for his part must finally rid himself of antiquated and basically un-Marxist ideas. He must stop confronting the Christian with a mere negation and learn to value him in a positive, constructive way. He must stop persecuting religion and churches, and abandon all duplicity. He is not required to become a Christian, but he must not be anti-Christian. He must discard traditional free-thinking, rooted in the bourgeois Enlightenment and for the most part concerned with superficial matters, especially the dubious conditions and reactionary attitude of the visible Church in denying all forms of human liberation in this world. Of course, the Marxist realises that this Church, bent on restoration only, is still everywhere present, intellectually and concretely; we need only recall in how many countries the Church is still a great landowner with large holdings in capitalist concerns, or how the policies of certain so-called "Christian" parties (representing the propertied bourgeoisie) make it almost impossible for the Church to be the standard-bearer of the world of tomorrow. But the Marxist must also realise that, despite all internal resistance, Christianity is undergoing a tremendous transformation, a crisis in which it does not need to disown its message. On the contrary, after the crisis (which may be regarded as a catharsis) the Christian message can be lived out more purely once it has been cleansed of the accretions of a mistaken world-view and an obsolete alliance with the world.

The Marxist must also realise that wherever the Christian message is really lived out the Communist goal of the just society, freed from poverty and exploitation, can be understood even better than it perhaps is among some Marxists. The Christian must realise that, when it no longer brings material benefit to pursue pseudo-Christian politics and to be a "Sunday Christian", the Christian Church will become much smaller numerically but richer in quality. Both the Christian and the Marxist, in answer to the ironical or even sincerely-held view that if there were more genuine Christians there would be fewer Communists, must realise that if there were more genuine Christians there would be more Communists, i.e. Christian Communists. So much for the present situation.

"The lovely days of Aranjuez are over"

It is precisely this present situation which has necessitated such frequent use of the word "must" in my address, much as I would have preferred to avoid it. But as I see it, the days of lovely discussions in lovely places are now over. There is no question of staging a dialogue here and now, but simply of outlining the essential conditions for such dialogue. Nor is there any question of extending the discussions of the "Paulus Society". I welcome those discussions, of course, if only because I have friends on both sides. But those discussions are still mainly well-phrased discourses by systematic theologians and casuists. I do not despise theoretical systematics or practical casuistry. But in face of the situation in the world today, the rise of a new fascism, the millions of people dying of famine in the midst of unprecedented abundance, in face of pestilence and disease which decimate entire nations, in face of the monstrous war in Vietnam, the conditions in Spain and Portugal, in Sicily or Greece, in Latin America and Angola, in face of the negro revolt in the USA and of the slums in great Christian (but very un-Christian) cities, in face of social insecurity, the threat of atomic warfare, the continuing

exploitation of man by man, by tyranny in various forms - in face of all this I take the position of the great Catholic writer Georges Bernanos: "The restoration of a human world is not a theological problem, but a social one. The casuists can give us no help at all." And if Bernanos assumes that this "human world" is a Christian one, then it is primarily the business of Christians to show that this is the case.

St. Christopher

The evidence might show, however, that this new "Christian world" is entirely different from the traditional one, and cannot be fitted into the framework of Christianity in the past. The Marxist might cooperate in providing this evidence, not to his own loss but to his advantage. Indeed the outcome might be that both of them, the Christian and the Marxist, would be like St. Christopher bearing this "New Thing" safely through the raging waters.

(From September 11th-14th the European Federation for Catholic Adult Education held its third Study Conference in the Paulus-Akademie in Zürich. Its theme was "Dialogue". The address given at the Conference by Konrad Farner, a Swiss Marxist, was published in Vorwärts and is reproduced here in an English translation, with permission).

THE POSITION OF THE "DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MARXISTS" IN SPAIN

Dr. José Maria GONZALEZ RUIZ, O.P.

I

In Spain the dialogue between Christians and Marxists began five years ago. In our country this dialogue involves particular difficulties, for the following reasons.

(1) The fact that the civic authorities do not allow freedom of opinion and freedom to hold meetings. This forces people to resort to clandestine methods, because officially there are no Marxists in Spain. Consequently hardly anyone dares to state publicly that he is a Marxist. Sometimes one pretends that a certain person is a Marxist and one then carries on a dialogue with him. However, much progress has recently been made, and one does find real Marxists with whom one can discuss things.

(2) The tremendous susceptibility shown by the Catholic hierarchy and by the old leaders of "National Catholicism" in Spain. Whenever the words "Marxism", "Communism" etc. are pronounced, they automatically have a certain conditioned reflex.

II

However, efforts have been made to pursue this dialogue in the normal way, and excellent results have been obtained.

We began by drawing a distinction between three levels in the dialogue:

(1) The first level deals with philosophical problems, and even theological ones. I have written a number of articles on this aspect which have appeared in reviews in Spain ("Cuadernos para el Diálogo", "Signo", "Juventud Obrera", Madrid) and in reviews published in exile ("Realidad", Rome; "Cuadernos de Ruedo Ibérico", Paris).

(2) The second level deals with political, social and economic "technique". This would be a strictly political level. Here we must recognise that the Second Vatican Council has destroyed all possibility of the survival of a "political confessionalism". Hence a distinction must always be drawn between two kinds of political dialogue: the first (for example) between the Communist Party and Christian democracy; the second between politicians who derive their ideas from Marxism and Christians who have no connection with Christian democracy, but have nevertheless chosen a concrete political line.

(3) The third level is directly concerned with action. The question is often raised, whether it is possible to construct access to action (even revolutionary action) which is free from "confessionalism". Action would be the test for measuring the commitment of believers and non-believers.

III

On the basis of this last observation we have realised that the first stage of the dialogue has already been surmounted. The meaning of

religious alienation has already been understood by both parties: the religious event is in itself ambiguous; it may either alienate or stimulate action. Consequently time must not be wasted in very "idealistic" long discussions, which might risk introducing a new alienation.

Two people or two groups which engage seriously in a dialogue must be prepared to go further than the dialogue itself. Dialogue cannot be institutionalised. It demands a conclusion. This institutionalisation of dialogue acquired the character of diplomacy. One would then be faced by a new "alienation": Diplomatic alienation.

IV

The militant Christians who are carrying on the struggle among the workers have often told their comrades that their political and trade-union commitment is entirely a-confessional. That is why members of the same Christian movement may belong to different political associations and to different trade-unions.

It is therefore understandable that publications of "Catholic Action" (like "Signo", which was recently suspended by the Bishops) have accused the Communists of "confessionalism", because they wave the Communist flag within the "workers' committees". The militant Christians have asked their Communist comrades to tell them if their own attitude is ever confessional.

V

For this reason the dialogue between Marxists and Christians is, in our view, already exhausted. We have realised that Marxism in itself is not taboo for Christians; and many Christians in Spain have already adopted typically Marxist attitudes, without this implying any abdication of their faith. If this dialogue is continued too long the impression will be given that the world is divided into Christians and Marxists, whereas in actual fact it is divided into exploiters and exploited.

We therefore think that dialogue between Christians and Marxists is profitable, on two conditions:

1) that the adjectives be not used in a way that is absolute and Manichean. In actual fact there are Christians who are Marxists, and Marxists who are Christians;

2) that the subject of the dialogue be no longer the binomial "Marxism-Christianity" but everything which concerns the urgent building-up of the new society that is so essential.

VI

Finally, we think it is time to stop using certain "-isms" and "-ists". Marxism cannot be a dogmatic sect; that would be a negation of itself. It was precisely Karl Marx who made the marvellous exclamation, "Do not let us wave any dogmatic flag!"

What we have to do is to change the face of society. Christians, on the basis of their faith, must reflect about their own attitude to

social phenomena such as Socialism (even if its inspiration is fundamentally Marxist), revolution and all forms of political, economic, cultural and social commitment. They must reflect without prejudice in fellowship with all men, without any kind of confessional discrimination.

The outcome of this reflection must never be a technically Christian solution of the problems raised (e.g. a "Christian Socialism"). It must be a contribution that is freely given and which is effective to the common task confronting mankind.